

75 SAFE & EFFECTIVE HERBAL REMEDIES: CHART PG. 30

THE Herb

JANUARY 2011

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can be found
on Page 38.

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Circle #10; see card pg 51





A Love for Wild Places


A passion for wild places and pristine lands runs deep in every fiber of my being.

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Shawn Donnille
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The Comfort and Cheer Issue

On the cover: Discover natural remedies for 75 common maladies; explore the beauty of saffron; warm up your winter with our hearty soup recipes; step into Colonial Williamsburg and investigate its beautiful gardens; and more.

75 Safe & Effective Herbal Remedies

Don't underestimate the power of plant medicine—doctors are increasingly open to recommending nondrug alternatives. Find our pull-out chart on Page 30.

Page 28

Grow Saffron, The World's Priciest Spice

What makes saffron so expensive? Learn more about its ancient roots, how to grow it, its medicinal qualities and discover many flavorful, saffron-infused recipes.

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Susan A. Roth

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Wholesome & Hearty: 7 Soup & Bread Recipes

Try one of our hearty, herb-infused recipes to make your winter seem less chilly and more delicious.

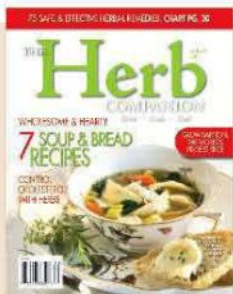
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12 Herbs for the Colonial Garden

The first Colonial herb gardens served as the apothecary, perfumery and spice rack for the average household.

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Colonial Williamsburg Foundation



Cover photo: Howard Lee Puckett

Chicken and Parsley Noodle Soup

On our cover, cozy and comforting Chicken and Parsley Noodle Soup is paired with a side of delicious fresh-baked bread slathered with herbed butter. Check out the whole story for more about this herbal twist on an old favorite.

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Control Cholesterol With Herbs

Learn which herbs are most effective for combating high cholesterol. Two herbalists give expert opinions.

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THE Herb COMPANION

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 2

January 2011

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Taylor Cole Miller

Make It Special

I have a confession to make. Brace yourself.

Two years ago, on a trip to Italy, I bought a box of saffron. The purchase was mildly extravagant, but a wonderful way to commemorate a remarkable moment in my life—I was in Italy! Besides, I'd never cooked anything with saffron. This pricey little box of spice would open new worlds to me.

The actual indulgence, however, isn't the confession. What I need to say is, that box of saffron has been sitting in my kitchen, staring at me accusingly every time I open the cabinet to make coffee, wondering when, exactly, I'm just going to get *on* with it and make a little something. Two years and I still haven't cooked with saffron. I only hope it's not too late.

I felt a surge of encouragement when I read Theresa O'Shea's fascinating article about saffron (Page 33) and realized that I've been saving this delicious spice—in effect *wasting* it, since it won't stay fresh forever—because I've been afraid of its specialness. Now? I have recipes, I have saffron and I'm not afraid to use them—once I decide which of Theresa's delicious recipes will be the first.

One of my secret fantasies is to someday open K.C.'s Soup Kitchen, a small bistro in which I will serve only soup, homemade bread and pie. Kris Wetherbee's article on how to warm up winter with savory soups (Page 38) added a few ideas to the fantasy. I dare you to read about those rosemary dumplings and parsley noodles and not feel your mouth begin to water. Once again, the addition of a few herbs elevates the commonplace to the level of *Wow!*

We're thrilled to offer, beginning on Page 28, Michael Castleman's article about safe, effective herbal alternatives to treat commonplace maladies, complete with a handy pull-out chart of 75 safe herbal remedies. Castleman is one of the country's foremost herbal experts, and as we all try to sort through the daily news of drug recalls and spiraling medical costs, his information can help all of us be more personally accountable for our health. While we don't suggest you stop doing anything your doctor has recommended, we do hope you might give these natural methods a test-drive, if you can, before you move on to the harder—and often harsher—stuff. For more in-depth information on any of the herbs or remedies mentioned, please go to our website, www.herbcompanion.com, and search our extensive archive.

Onward!

K.C. Compton
Editor in chief

Be a Guest Blogger

Are you interested in being part of our online community? Our blogger village continues to grow, and if you haven't visited us online, I hope you'll soon make time to check out our knowledgeable friends who are gracious enough to write about their passion and adventures growing, cooking and healing with herbs. We are always looking for guest bloggers if you want to join their ranks. Whether you blog currently and want to expand onto our site, or you are an Internet novice looking for a group of fellow herb enthusiasts, we'd love to have you blog on www.herbcompanion.com. E-mail editor@herbcompanion.com.

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Circle #5; see card pg 51

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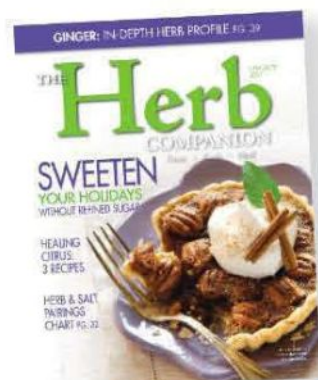
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Dear *Herb Companion*,

AS SOMEONE RECENTLY diagnosed with gluten intolerance, I would love to see more gluten-free recipes. Thanks for asking!

Erica Lake
Murray, Utah

AFTER READING “SWEETEN Your Holidays without Refined Sugar” in your November 2010 issue, I was hoping that you would have suggestions for stevia.

Joan Mathre
St. Petersburg, Florida

Stevia is an intense sweetener—about 300 times sweeter than regular sugar—whereas the article concentrates on sweeteners that behave more like sugar. I covered stevia in 2006. The article is called “Naturally Sweet,” and it’s available on www.herbcompanion.com. If purchasing stevia, look for a product with at least 80 percent of the component known as “rebaudioside A,” which leaves less of the bitter aftertaste that some people find objectionable. Also note that baked goods containing stevia don’t turn golden brown, and stevia doesn’t work well in yeast breads, as it won’t allow the yeast to rise. But it’s fine for many sweets. —Author Gina Mohammed

I LIVE IN NORTHERN Michigan where we have cold winters and long, cool falls and springs. What culinary herbs are good to grow in my area? I love to cook with fresh herbs and I miss them when they’re gone.

Mary LeDoux
Iron River, Michigan

Good indoor herbs are basil, mint, sage, thyme, dill, lavender and chives. Because the sky is often very overcast, do use grow lights. —Donna Frawley, Frawley’s Fine Herbarry

YOUR SEPTEMBER 2010 article, “Bite-Sized Botany,” has me wanting to grow those mints. Can I grow more than one kind or flavor of herb in one container? Or will the scents blend and cancel each other out or one overpower another?

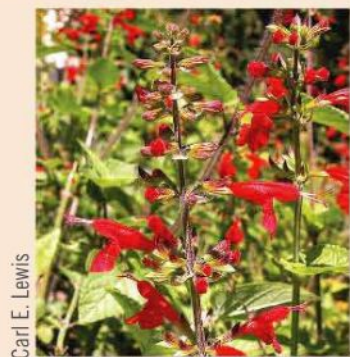
Deb Nelson
New England

Generally, you can plant as many herbs in one pot as you can cram in there, but separate mints to prevent cross-pollination that may dilute their scents. Mints are usually regarded for their scented leaves, and scents can change, dilute or cross in future generations. Your perception of scent is another matter; the scents will mingle delightfully. Be sure to harvest regularly to prevent flowering and to yield even more scented leaves. —Author Kathleen Halloran

I LOVED “HERBAL VINEGARS for Skin and Hair” in the November 2010 issue! I just have a few questions. Do the herbs need to be crushed or chopped or can they be placed whole in the solution? Also, the egg purifying facial mask made a lot. Can it be stored in the fridge, and if so, for how long? I am a new subscriber and I really have been enjoying the issues. Thanks so much for these great recipes. They will make fantastic Christmas gifts for moms and sisters-in-law!

Jessica Thomas
Via e-mail

Fresh or dried herbs can be placed whole in the solution. In fact, this makes them easier to remove when straining. For storage, stash leftover mask in the fridge, covered. It should keep for a few weeks. —Author Janice Cox



Carl E. Lewis

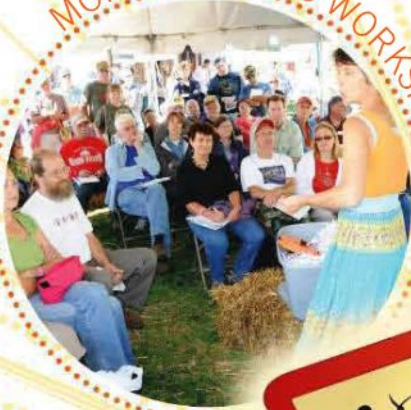
Cynthia Meredith has written about Texas sage (*Salvia coccinea*) online.

CYNTHIA, I ENJOY READING your blog series “Growing Herbs in Texas.” One day I hope to catch up with you at one of your markets. I’m not too far away from you. I think I enjoy you most because lots of what is going on in your garden is also going on in mine at the same time. Happy gardening!

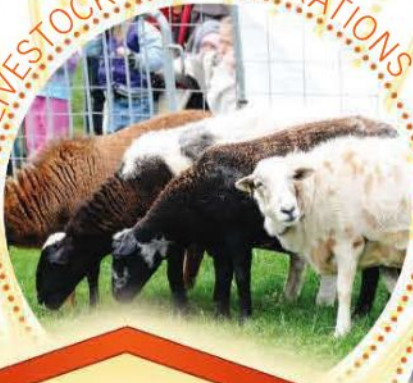
Pammy
Waller, Texas

Cynthia Meredith is one of our guest bloggers. We’d like to feature your region, too. To become a guest blogger, see Page 6.

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Herbs for Health

GARDEN TO TABLE:

Seasonal Sage

WHEN IT COMES TO winter foods, sage is a perfect match. Not only does this robust herb stand up well to slow-simmered casseroles and meats, it's also well-equipped to weather the winter garden in USDA Zones 5 and higher. And it's one of the best herbs to winter over indoors.

OF ALL THE GARDEN SAGES (*Salvia officinalis*), the green-leaved varieties such as common garden sage, 'Holt's Mammoth' and 'Berggarten' are the easiest to grow and the hardiest choice for cold winter weather.

GREEN SAGE IS ALSO THE BEST choice for cooking, with just the right balance of pine, citrus and camphor flavors. Purple, tricolor and golden sages are more sensitive to cold and often overpower dishes with their strong camphorlike flavor.

KEEP SAGE AT ITS BEST by storing whole dried leaves in an airtight container. Crush the dried leaves between your hands before cooking, then add to your recipe.

FRESH SAGE TASTES MORE LEMONY than the dried leaves. Insert fresh leaves in a turkey or chicken before baking, wrap leaves around small birds before roasting, or lay on top of a pork or beef roast. Chop fresh leaves and sprinkle over a homemade pizza, or add 1/2 to 1 tablespoon minced fresh leaves to your favorite biscuit recipe.

SAGE PAIRS WELL WITH meats and meat pies, cheese and egg dishes, winter squash and sweet potatoes, stuffing, potatoes, anything tomato, rice and beans. Herbs that complement it include parsley, rosemary, thyme, oregano, garlic and bay leaf. —Contributing Editor Kris Wetherbee lives and gardens in western Oregon.



The True Power of Herbs...



"As my wife was finally starting to recover, I couldn't help but be thankful for alternative medicine. You see, it all started the day she returned home from Mexico, sicker than I'd ever seen her. It was at that very moment that I knew my experience as a registered nurse and herbalist would be invaluable. Almost instantly, I began preparing some herbal remedies to help detoxify her body. From there, we selected an integrative team of Medical Doctors, Naturopathic physicians and specialists in Chinese Medicine and Acupuncture. After a series of dead ends, a breakthrough! Following our second visit with a skillful practitioner of traditional Chinese Medicine, my wife's health began to noticeably improve. This realization only reinforced my belief in traditional Chinese and Ayurvedic Medicine, especially the well documented uses of herbal teas. Now, for nearly two decades, we have dedicated our lives to growing and providing herbal products and teas based on the philosophy that, through plants, Mother Nature provides the power to heal."

**— Randy Buresh, Co-founder
of Oregon's Wild Harvest**

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FRESH CLIPS

[Herbal Health]

3 WAYS TO TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT Plant Medicine

ALTHOUGH STEVEN FOSTER'S breakdown of the statistics regarding British doctors' knowledge of herbs (opposite) can be disheartening, don't lose hope. Physicians are not herbalists, after all. And simple plant medicine is showing up, at least anecdotally, in the modern clinic. Aloe in burn units, clove oil at the oral surgeon, oatmeal advice from the cardiologist—these are just some examples of the ways we here at *The Herb Companion* have personally seen plant medicine advocated by the mainstream medical community. On Page 28, Michael Castleman explains how he has seen doctors (including his wife) become aware of the efficacy of herbal remedies. We all want appropriate health care—medical attention that is calibrated to the specific problem. Herbs can help with that aim. But how can you talk to your doctor about using herbs as part of a comprehensive health plan? Here are some tips:

1) CHOOSE THE RIGHT DOCTOR

Go grassroots: It can be difficult to find a doctor who knows their stuff and who connects with you. But ask around. Perhaps friends have had a good experience with a particular doctor. Maybe your herbalist can recommend a physician they have worked with personally or professionally. Start there.

2) ASK ABOUT SPECIFIC HERBS

Whether you have a rapport with your doctor or not, it never hurts to ask specifically, "What do you think of trying X herb?" It is important to always let your doctor know you want to use an herb, especially if you are already using

prescription medications. If they don't have objections, but need more info, move on to the next step.

3) PRESENT RESEARCH

Gather information about medicinal herbs you are interested in and discuss with your doctor. Sometimes doctors are interested, but uninformed (and too busy for research). Research herbs or conditions in our archives at www.herbcompanion.com, or by checking the German Commission E reports (see Page 15) and the American Botanical Council's updates on scientific studies on herbs at www.herbalgram.org. —Allison Martin is managing editor of *The Herb Companion*.



BY THE NUMBERS:

What Do Doctors Know About Herbs?

ACCORDING TO A RECENT survey published in the April 2010 issue of *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin*, a newsletter for medical professionals in the United Kingdom, 71.8 percent of respondents believe consumers' faith in herbal medicine is misplaced. Nearly 85 percent believe herbal medicines are not adequately regulated. And a majority (62.8 percent) do not provide information on herbal medicines to patients. Most health-care practitioners (75.5 percent) believe that doctors are poorly informed on herbal medicines. Nearly half (46.6 percent) felt they themselves were poorly informed on the subject. Most sought information on herbal medi-

cines through Internet searches. —*Steven Foster is an expert on medicinal plants.*

Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin (DTB) Survey on Herbal Medicines. *Drug and Therapeutics Bulletin* 2010; 48(4): 46–47.

Did You Know?

The German government evaluated the safety and efficacy of more than 300 herbs and herbal combinations in The Complete German Commission E Monographs. An English translation is available from the American Botanical Council.

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Circle #1; see card pg 51

Coming Next Issue
March 2011

WINE AND HERB PAIRINGS
Surprise your friends (and perhaps yourself)
by adding an extra zing to your dinner
when you match these smooth wines to our
delicious herb-infused recipes.

Also:

- 2011 Herb of the Year: Horseradish
- Keep a Year-Round Garden
- Construct an Herbal Rock Wall Garden
- Discover Why Your Herbs are Dying
- Herb Profile: Milky Oats

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Circle #14; see card pg 51

[Editor's Picks]

Organic Vanilla Extract

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Madagascar Bourbon vanilla beans make this USDA-certified organic vanilla smooth, gentle and deliciously creamy. The fact that 1 percent of all Simply Organic sales goes to benefiting organic agriculture around the world only makes it sweeter. Add this gentle aromatic extract to hot cocoa for a special treat, or use it to infuse your favorite holiday breads and cookies with delectable flavor. www.simplyorganicfoods.com



Rothschild Bird

by Herend, about \$100 to \$400

Sometimes we fall in love with things somewhat beyond our reach. Such is the case with these lovely, pricey pieces of Herend china, found in our soup story on Page 38. These scallop-edged porcelain plates were first designed in 1850 for the Baroness Rothschild, after she misplaced a pearl necklace and later discovered a group of birds playing with it in a tree. www.herend.com/en and www.herendusa.com

FRAGRANT

Seasonal Decorations

LAST YEAR, HELEN TRAMTE, librarian for The Herb Society of America, decorated a 14-foot Christmas tree in the Lake Metroparks Farmpark lobby, located in Kirtland, Ohio. You can re-create her fragrant ornaments with materials harvested from your garden.

- In June, harvest *Allium christophii*, also known as star of Persia, and store in your garage until December. When you're ready, simply place in tree.

- Make pomanders by studding 10 to 20 oranges or clementines with whole cloves. Make sure you use plenty of cloves, otherwise the pomanders may rot. Next, dust pomanders with cinnamon, place in a bowl to dry and roll in cinnamon once a day for a week. Last, wrap each pomander in fabric netting so its fresh fragrance can fill the room; tie with a seasonal ribbon.

- Mix 10 to 20 clusters of herbs in fabric netting and tie together with a ribbon. Tramte's favorite combination is artemisia (*Artemisia* spp.) and sage (*Salvia* spp.). She particularly likes pineapple sage (*Salvia elegans*).

- Combine applesauce, cinnamon and glue to make scented ornaments. Visit www.herbcompanion.com/herbornament for Cinnamon Spice Ornament instructions.

- Save money. Before you start crafting, scout garage sales and thrift stores for the best deals on ribbon, beading and tools. Happy ornament making! —Gina DeBacker is assistant editor with The Herb Companion.



Robin Sikkberg, HSA

Mix Herbal Incense

Incense makes use of many botanical products that cannot be liquefied or distilled into a perfume. The following incense blends will bathe family gatherings with a seasonal glow. Sprinkle loose ingredients over smoldering, slow-burning coals. —Sandy Maine

Christmas

- 1 ounce pine needles
- ½ ounce hemlock needles
- ½ ounce sassafras powder
- ½ ounce cedar leaf
- ¼ ounce whole cloves

Frankincense and Lavender

- ¼ ounce frankincense
- ¼ ounce ground cinnamon
- 1 ounce lavender
- 1 ounce rosemary
- ½ ounce sandalwood

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5 Skin-Soothing Herbal Scrubs

Try a scrub with the soothing power of lavender on Page 21.

Wash dull winter skin away with these gentle, yet effective, herbal skin scrubs.

BY JANICE COX

Did you know?

Natural exfoliators (or cleansing scrubs) keep your skin healthy and glowing. As an added benefit, they also boost circulation, giving you an extra glow. Depending on your skin type, cleansing scrubs should be used two to three times a week to keep the skin clean and healthy. Despite the name “scrub,” you should be gentle when applying these exfoliators; it takes just light pressure applied in a circular motion to slough off dead skin.

Want healthy, glowing skin? Exfoliation is key, and cleansing scrubs should be an important part of your natural beauty regimen. Dead surface skin cells can, over time, build up and become unresponsive to lotions and creams. This gives your complexion a dull, dry appearance since creams, lotions and oils do their job by forming a protective barrier on your skin and locking in moisture. Ridding your complexion of dead, flaky skin will allow these moisturizers to function.

Scrubs are not limited to the face—they can be used all over your body to keep skin soft. Don't forget rough skin areas like knees, heels and elbows.

When making herbal scrubs, it is important to grind the ingredients as finely as possible. Treat your skin with care and gently scrub in a circular motion. Rinse the skin thoroughly and always pat, never rub, your skin dry. For the body, you can use a scrub with a bit more grit and even apply the treatment with an all-natural skin scrubber, such as a loofah or rough cotton washcloth. Here are some simple herbal scrubs you can make at home using natural ingredients. 🌿

Janice Cox is the author of Natural Beauty at Home (Henry Holt and Company, 2002). Purchase on Page 51.



Coffee beans can be used to improve your skin tone, since caffeine helps stimulate circulation.

Refreshing Facial Scrub

There are many natural ingredients that you can combine with your favorite cleanser to help exfoliate while you cleanse. But this scrub doesn't need cleanser added, because oatmeal is a good alternative to soap for sensitive skin. Mint is naturally cleansing, antiseptic and energizing.

- ½ cup oatmeal
- 1 tablespoon raw, unsalted sunflower seeds
- 1 teaspoon dried mint leaves

- 1 In a food processor or blender, combine all ingredients and process until you have a fine, granular powder.
- 2 To use: Mix together a teaspoon or two with water to make a paste and massage into damp skin. Rinse well with warm water followed by a cool-water rinse, and pat your skin dry.

Anti-Cellulite Leg Scrub

Caffeine promotes circulation and can be helpful for treating cellulite. Besides sloughing off dead skin cells, the massaging action of this scrub will help boost circulation. Regular use, in combination with exercise and a healthy diet, should yield improvement in a few weeks.

- 1 cup fresh coffee grounds, cooled
- ½ cup raw sugar
- ½ cup coarse sea salt
- ½ cup light oil, such as vegetable or sunflower oil

- 1 Mix together all ingredients and pour into a clean container.
- 2 To use: Massage into clean skin in a circular motion, focusing on your upper thighs, where cellulite is most common. Massage your legs using strong, flowing strokes for at least 5 minutes to boost circulation.

Make More Super-Simple Facial Scrubs

These simple beauty ingredients can be used to keep your complexion clean and clear. Mix a teaspoon or two of the chosen ingredient with water (or your favorite cleanser) in the palm of your hand. You can use a clean coffee grinder to process nuts, grains and other scrub ingredients.

Sugar—Brown sugar, raw sugar and granulated sugar all work well to cleanse and soften dry skin.

Nuts—Almonds, walnuts, hazelnuts and pecans all work well. Make sure you use only the meat of the nut and avoid any shells. Shells are too sharp and can tear delicate skin.

Grains—Grains are instant skin scrubbers, and, aside from whole-grain oats, no extra processing is necessary. Try wheat germ, cornmeal, whole-wheat flour and quinoa to keep your complexion healthy.

Fruit peels—Citrus peels can be dried, ground and added to skin scrubs for extra sloughing action.

Fruit pits—Pits such as apricot, peach and avocado can all be ground and added to cleansers, or incorporated in skin scrub recipes. When using stone fruit pits, make sure that you crack them like a nut and only use the soft inner kernel. The pits are too sharp to use on skin.

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BODY & SOUL

Save Money with At-Home Spa Treatments

Creating a spa-style treatment at home is really very simple. You can treat yourself in the privacy of your own home and save both time and money. Create a spa environment by turning off your phone, playing your favorite soft music, lighting a few candles and making yourself a relaxing cup of herbal tea. Here are some easy steps to follow:

Cleanse: In the bath or shower, cleanse your skin with your favorite soap or gentle homemade cleanser.

Exfoliate: Mix up your favorite body scrub recipe or use a commercial product available at most natural food stores and bath and beauty boutiques. A very simple at-home scrub is equal parts light natural oil with raw sugar or coarse salt. Standing in the tub or shower, massage your scrub all over your body, starting with your feet and working your way up to your shoulders. Be careful: The oil can make your feet very slippery.

Massage: Using a cotton washcloth or loofah bath mitt, massage your body in a circular motion. Be careful to not scrub too hard as this can be more irritating to your skin than helpful. You just want to remove the top layer of dead skin cells and surface debris.

Rinse: Rinse well with warm (not hot) water and follow up with a cool-water rinse.

Dry: Pat your skin dry or wrap up in a warm, fluffy bathrobe.

Moisturize: Massage a rich body lotion or natural oil into your skin, which helps lock in moisture absorbed during your bath or shower.

Relax: Enjoy the moment and rest for 20 minutes, letting your body recover and re-energize for busy times to come.



Rosemary Spa-Style Salt Scrub

Sea salt scrubs get your body soft and smooth. They have been used for centuries to clean and deodorize the skin. This also makes a nice gift for a friend who can use a bit of extra pampering.

- 2 cups coarse kosher or sea salt**
- 1 cup light oil such as almond, sesame or sunflower oil**
- 1 teaspoon dried rosemary leaves**

- 1** Stir together ingredients and pour into a clean container.
- 2** To use: Stand in the shower or tub, take a handful of the paste, and massage into your skin, starting with your feet. Massage the paste all over your body. Rinse well with warm water. Don't use soap or you will remove the oil and its moisturizing benefits.

Gentle Cleansing Scrub

This is a mild non-soap cleanser that is perfect for sensitive skin. Cucumber juice, chamomile flowers, and aloe vera gel are all cleansing and soothing to the skin. Cornmeal is a classic skin scrubber that can be used by all skin types. For a variation on this recipe, try using white or blue cornmeal.

- 2 tablespoons fresh cucumber puree, made from processing fresh cucumber in the blender**
- 1 tablespoon dried chamomile flowers (can use chamomile tea)**
- 1 tablespoon aloe vera gel**
- 1 tablespoon yellow cornmeal**

- 1** Mix together all ingredients until well mixed.
- 2** To use: Massage into damp skin focusing on classic clogged pore areas like the nose and chin. Avoid the eye area. Rinse well with warm water followed by a cool-water rinse, and pat your skin dry.

Lavender-Soy Body Scrub

Soy is great for the skin. It increases collagen production and helps keep skin tone even. This scrub also is soothing to dry skin because it uses sugar, which is less dehydrating than harsh chemical peels or salt rubs. The vegetable oil also helps moisturize, and dried lavender is naturally soothing and antiseptic to dry skin.

- ¼ cup granulated sugar**
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 2 tablespoons soy milk**
- 2 teaspoons dried lavender flowers or 1 to 2 drops lavender essential oil**

- 1** Stir all ingredients together until smooth and pour into a clean container.
- 2** To use: Standing in the tub or shower, gently massage the mixture all over your body to increase circulation and remove any dry or flaky skin. Rinse well, then follow with a light natural oil or rich body lotion.

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Vital, Versatile Vervain



Denis Barthel

BY BETSY STRAUCH

Common Vervain

Verbena officinalis

Perennial; Hardy in
Zones 4 through 8

Compared with its flashy garden verbena cousins, common vervain is an unprepossessing plain Jane. Yet according to Henry Beston, writing in the book *Herbs and the Earth* (1935), “To those interested in magic and religion, there is no herb in the garden more worthy of attention, for this simple plant without fragrance, without an outer look of power, without a flower of significance, was singled out from among all other plants and herbs as the most sacred of the growing things of earth between the Pillars of Hercules and the roots of the Caucasus.”

Vervain is one of some 250 species of

annuals, herbaceous perennials and subshrubs in the genus *Verbena*. Although most members of the genus are native to tropical and subtropical America, vervain is native to southern Europe; it probably came to North America with the early English settlers.

The loosely branched, stiff stems may grow to 2 1/2 feet tall. The leaves, opposite and rough in texture, are of three types: Those lowest on the stem are coarsely toothed and stalked; those in the middle, also stalked, are oval and deeply lobed or cut; while the leaves highest on the stem are oval or linear, stalkless and

Vervain is rich in lore, both magical and religious.
It is even said to have been used to stem
the flow of Christ's crucifixion wounds.

irregularly toothed.

From early summer through early fall, tiny purplish flowers occur in narrow spikes at the tips of the stems or in the leaf axils. Each has five fused sepals covered with glandular hairs, five fused petals with spreading lobes and four stamens. Only a few flowers are open at any time. They are insect-pollinated. The dry fruits contain four nutlets that are dispersed by ants.

Several members of the verbena family may be better known than common vervain to today's herb enthusiasts. Blue vervain (*V. hastata*), an American native, has been used for both food and medicine (and is considered by some to be a weed). Lemon vervain is another name for the familiar fragrant herb lemon verbena (*Aloysia triphylla*). Chaste tree (*Vitex agnus-castus*), used to treat gynecological disorders; Aztec sweet herb (*Phyla scaberrima*); and Mexican oregano (*Lippia graveolens*) are other herbal relatives.

Stories and Lore

Vervain's reputation as a sacred plant dates at least to ancient Egypt, where it was thought to have sprung from the tears of the goddess Isis as she mourned the death of the god Osiris. It was also sacred to the Persians, Druids and worshippers of Thor in Scandinavia. The Greeks called it *hierobotane*, meaning "holy plant;" the Roman version of the name was *herba sacra*. Both used the branches to brush the altars of the temples; the generic name Verbena—"leafy branch"—alludes to

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this practice. Legend has it that vervain was also used to staunch the bleeding of Christ's wounds on the cross; the herb is sometimes known as herb-on-the-cross.

During the Middle Ages, vervain was an ingredient of magicians' and witches' potions, but common folk could use it for protection, as John Aubrey notes in *Miscellanies Upon Various Subjects* (1890), quoting the saying from the Middle Ages: "Vervain and Dill / Hinder witches from their will." It was also highly regarded as an aphrodisiac, earning it the name *herba veneris*, or "herb of Venus," (the goddess of love).

Uses for Vervain

Vervain is one of the classical medicinal herbs. A medieval cure for a throat tumor called for tying part of a vervain root around the throat and drying the rest over a fire. As the fire shriveled the root, the tumor would shrivel, too, the theory went. Herb expert James A. Duke's Phytochemical and Ethnobotanical Databases (www.ars-grin.gov/duke/) list more than 50 medical conditions for which vervain has been used, but the herb has never been proven effective in alleviating them.

In China, vervain has been used ex-

perimentally to treat malaria, blood flukes, coughs and inflammation. It is suspected of poisoning cattle in Australia, and touching it can cause dermatitis in some humans.

The common name vervain is believed to come from the Celtic words *fer*, "to remove," and *faen*, "stone," in reference to its reputation for curing kidney stones. A 1994 study of vervain and six other herbs traditionally used to prevent and treat kidney stones did find some beneficial effects, but the researchers concluded that more effective and equally innocuous substitutes are well-known.

The tender young leaves may be brewed into a tea, and a big batch of the tea in bathwater is said to be soothing. The flowers may be used as a garnish or, as is done in Turkey, used to flavor salt.

Growing Vervain

In Europe, vervain is found growing wild in well-drained or dry alkaline soil in sun or half shade. Beston says vervain is "not particular about soil but likes a sunny place." He advises placing plants "well back in the border, planting them in a close-growing line, and facing them with some shorter and more compact perennial."

Vervain reseeds readily. The Druids advised gathering plants when neither the sun nor the moon is in the sky and leaving honeycombs on the ground in exchange for the harvest. 🍯

Herb lover Betsy Strauch is a former Herb Companion editor.



Control Cholesterol

Garlic can help with cholesterol woes.

Expert advice on which herbs can help with cholesterol.

BY TERRY WILLARD
AND JILL STANSBURY

Q *My mother has very high cholesterol (275). She's 67 and refuses to take her prescription medication. I think that's okay, but I'd like to help her with some herbs. I've instructed her to eat lots of oat bran and oatmeal. She takes four capsules (500 mg each) of garlic three times a day. Is there anything else she can do or take that will help her lower her cholesterol?*

A **Willard responds:** This is a fairly common problem in our clinic. According to The American Heart Association, 30 percent of Americans older than 20 have elevated cholesterol levels. Too much cholesterol in the blood can lead to heart disease and stroke, which are among the leading causes of death in the United States. The four most important herbs to consider are garlic (*Allium sativum*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), cayenne

pepper (*Capsicum annuum*) and reishi (*Ganoderma lucidum*). We should also consider Syndrome X as a possible cause of this problem.

Garlic is useful in controlling and preventing atherosclerosis and lowering blood cholesterol. It not only lowers total serum cholesterol (6 to 12 percent in three months), it lowers the LDL ("bad" cholesterol) 12 to 15 percent while increasing the HDL ("good" cholesterol). I usually suggest 1,000 mg twice daily.

Ginger may lower both serum and hepatic cholesterol while inhibiting platelet aggregation. I often use ginger tea for this but have also used 250 to 500 mg in capsule form twice daily.

Cayenne is a strong, local circulatory stimulant. In studies, cayenne has significantly lowered both plasma cholesterol and triglycerides, but even more

Garlic, ginger, cayenne pepper and reishi can help lower cholesterol.

important, it has improved patients' LDL to HDL ratio. Capsaicin, cayenne's active constituent, has been shown to decrease platelet aggregation while thinning the blood by a different mechanism than aspirin. I usually give this in capsule form, 250 to 500 mg during two meals daily.

Reishi may protect from the effects of accumulated fatty acid and cholesterol. This herb also showed significant results in lowering blood lipids and fatty deposits in the liver, with significant drops in cholesterol and triglyceride levels noted after two months. I have my patients take a concentrate of 15:1 in a dose of 150 to 300 mg, twice daily.

Syndrome X (or insulin resistance) is one of the major causes of increases in cholesterol and heart attack. This means that

some people get an increase in blood fats by consuming carbohydrates such as flours, sugars and some starchy vegetables. Reduction of carbohydrates in the diet can often be the most important factor in reducing blood lipids and the risk of heart attacks.

Stansbury responds: Your mother's blood pressure, HDL/LDL ratio, triglyceride, and blood glucose levels, if all normal, make me less concerned about her cholesterol than I would be if any of these were also high or borderline. If your mother is not obese and exercises, doesn't smoke, is generally healthy and has no other risk factors for heart disease, her cholesterol is merely a number on a piece of paper. Cardiologists are not too concerned about reducing the cholesterol of those older than 75 if there's no accompanying heart or circulatory dis-



Ginger Tea

Try this recipe for a delicious way to curb your cholesterol. It also helps ease an upset tummy, and can warm you up on a long winter evening. SERVES 1

2 cups water

**6 (or more, to taste) slices fresh gingerroot
or 2 teaspoons dried chopped ginger**

1 Bring water and ginger to a boil and simmer for about 10 minutes.

2 Strain out the ginger, sweeten with honey if desired, and enjoy. —Amy Mayfield



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Cayenne can be helpful in regulating cholesterol.

ease. However, there is much your mother may do to lower the number.

A good diet and regular exercise are essential. While people generally know of the dangers of too much “bad fat” (such as hydrogenated oils and fried foods), not everyone realizes how much the consumption of sugar and flour elevates cholesterol. Restrict sugars, candy and flour-based foods, favoring fresh fruits and vegetables. Good fats such as olive or fish oil don’t need to be restricted, nor do eggs, in moderation. High-fiber diets may lower cholesterol, so keep up the good work with the oats.

Liver herbs can help lower cholesterol

because the liver processes and metabolizes cholesterol. Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), burdock (*Arctium lappa*) and Oregon grape root (*Mahonia aquifolium*) may be useful. Commercial formulas, sometimes marketed as “lipotropic factors,” combine such herbs with choline and inositol, two lesser-known B vitamins that are needed by the liver to process cholesterol. Continue for at least three months before rechecking cholesterol levels. Many spicy culinary herbs such as garlic are noted to reduce cholesterol and/or improve HDL/LDL ratios. Cayenne, ginger, cinnamon and turmeric in the diet or

in capsules may help. B vitamins, needed to maintain healthy blood fats, should be supplemented. Besides choline, folic acid and niacin appear most helpful, but it’s wise to take a comprehensive B formula. Antioxidant vitamins are beneficial since they can help protect blood vessels from damage. The Indian herb guggul (*Commiphora mukul*) also may be helpful in reducing your mother’s cholesterol. 🌿

Terry Willard is president of the Canadian Association of Herbal Practitioners.

Jill Stansbury wrote Herbs for Health and Healing (Publication International, 1997).



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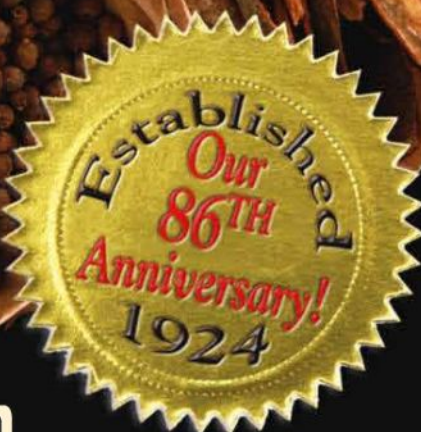
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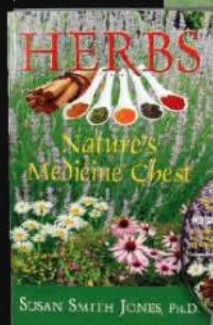


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*Before going to the big guns of
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nature's gentler, less expensive alternatives.*

By Michael Castleman

Thirty years ago, when I started writing about medicinal herbs, the vast majority of M.D.s (my wife included) never recommended herbs over drugs. Today, doctors are increasingly open to recommending nondrug alternatives given reasonable evidence of safety and effectiveness.

Unfortunately, many medical authorities still disparage medicinal herbs. Critics make four accusations: Herbs are ineffective, unsafe, unregulated and, when they work, they're not as strong as drugs.

Ineffective? Hardly. As I document in my book, *The New Healing Herbs* (Rodale Inc., 2001), thousands of studies confirm the effectiveness of medicinal herbs for hundreds of conditions.

Unsafe? Like drugs, medicinal herbs can cause harm. Anything that's pharmacologically active can. To ensure safety, purchase a guide that emphasizes safety, such as my book or the American Botanical Council's *ABC Clinical Guide to Herbs* (ABC, 2003), or check out the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database (www.naturaldatabase.com).

Anyone who calls herbs hazardous is totally misinformed. Every year, the American Association of Poison Control Centers (AAPCC) compiles statistics on accidental deaths from drugs, herbs, vitamins and other supplements. The AAPCC's most recent report (2008) records 1,756 accidental poisoning deaths. How many were attributable to medicinal herbs? Zero. In every accidental death caused by a pharmacological agent, the culprit was a pharmaceutical. And it's been that way for many years. Herbs are safer than drugs.

University of Toronto researchers combed 30 years of medical literature (1966 to 1996) for reports of drug side effects in hospital patients. Extrapolating from the 39 most rigorous studies, they estimated that drug side effects kill an astonishing 106,000 U.S. hospital patients per year and cause 2.2 million serious, non-fatal problems. This makes drug side effects the nation's fourth leading cause of death. The true number of drug-caused injuries is undoubtedly higher; this study focused solely on hospital patients, not the public. *Note:* These deaths didn't result from medical errors; they occurred when drugs were administered as approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

Unregulated? Before approving new drugs, the FDA requires

drugmakers to prove them safe and effective. Such tests aren't required of herbs, leading to claims that herbs are unregulated and, by implication, unsafe. But as we've seen, the supposedly stringent regulation of drugs hasn't kept them from causing great harm.

In addition, preapproval studies typically involve only a few thousand people. Many side effects—some serious—only turn up in one user in 10,000 to 50,000, or more. These problems don't emerge until the drug is widely used by people unaware that they are guinea pigs. Because so many new side effects turn up during the five years after approval, the FDA requires drugmakers to rewrite the warning labels of half of new drugs. Yes, drugs are regulated more stringently than herbs, but regulation doesn't guarantee safety. Hundreds of studies show that, when compared head-to-head with herbs, drugs almost always cause more side effects. The vast majority of medicinal herbs have been used for centuries, standing the test of time.

Not as strong? Dose for dose, yes, herbs aren't as strong as drugs. Willow bark contains a natural form of aspirin, but the standard dose (1 to 2 cups of tea or 1 to 2 teaspoons of tincture) doesn't relieve pain as well as a standard dose of aspirin, ibuprofen (Motrin), acetaminophen (Tylenol) or naproxen (Aleve). As a result, critics dismiss herbs as medicinal wimps.

Rather than herbs being too weak, many drugs are too strong, causing side effects ranging from annoying to insufferable. *Do no harm* is the first axiom of medicine. This means that treatment should begin at the lowest possible effective dose. Why use a bulldozer if a broom suffices? Herbs should be prescribed first. Only those who truly need stronger medicine should use drugs, which cost more and have a greater risk of side effects. Unfortunately, American medicine does the opposite. Doctors prescribe drugs first, and only when the drugs are intolerable do some doctors suggest herbs. We don't need medicine that's stronger. We need medicine that's smarter.

If you'd like to try herbs instead of drugs, the list on the next two pages is a good place to start. These herbs have been included because of the strong clinical evidence of their efficacy. 🌿

Michael Castleman is one of the nation's leading health writers, according to Library Journal.

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Arthritis	Capsicum, ginger, turmeric, willow, cat's claw, devil's claw
Asthma	Coffee, ephedra, tea
Athlete's foot	Topical tea tree oil
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Bronchitis	Echinacea, pelargonium
Burns	Aloe
Cancer	Bilberry, blackberry, cocoa (dark chocolate), green tea, garlic, ginseng, maitake mushroom, pomegranate, raspberry, reishi mushroom
Canker sores	Goldenseal
Colds	Echinacea, andrographis, ginseng, coffee, licorice root (sore throat), tea (nasal and chest congestion)
Congestive heart failure	Hawthorn
Constipation	Apple, psyllium seed, senna
Cough	Eucalyptus
Depression, mild to moderate	St. John's wort
Diabetes, Type 2	Garlic, beans (navy, pinto, black, etc.), cinnamon, eleuthero, flax seed, green tea
Diabetic ulcers	Comfrey
Diarrhea	Bilberry, raspberry
Diverticulitis	Peppermint
Dizziness	Ginger, ginkgo
Earache	Echinacea
Eczema	Chamomile, topical borage seed oil, evening primrose oil
Fatigue	Cocoa (dark chocolate), coffee, eleuthero, ginseng, rhodiola, tea
Flu	Echinacea, elderberry syrup (see also "Colds")

Circle #10; see card pg 51

Use this guide as a jumping-off point to try inexpensive, gentle herbal health solutions.

Ailment	Herb
Gas	Fennel, dill
Giardia	Goldenseal
Gingivitis	Goldenseal, green tea
Hay fever	Stinging nettle, butterbur
Herpes	Topical lemon balm, topical comfrey, echinacea, garlic, ginseng
High blood pressure	Garlic, beans, cocoa (dark chocolate), hawthorn
High blood sugar	Fenugreek
High cholesterol	Apple, cinnamon, cocoa (dark chocolate), evening primrose oil, flax seed, soy foods, green tea
Hot flashes	Red clover, soy, black cohosh
Impotence	Yohimbe
Indigestion	Chamomile, ginger, peppermint
Infection	Topical tea tree oil, astragalus, echinacea, eleuthero, garlic, ginseng, rhodiola
Insomnia	Kava, evening primrose, hops, lemon balm, valerian
Irregular heartbeat	Hawthorn
Irregularity	Senna, psyllium seed
Irritable bowel syndrome	Chamomile, peppermint
Lower back pain	Thymol, carvacrol, white willow bark
Menstrual cramps	Kava, raspberry leaf, chasteberry
Migraine	Feverfew, butterbur
Morning sickness	Ginger
Motion sickness	Ginger
Muscle pain	Capsicum, wintergreen
Nausea	Ginger
Premenstrual syndrome	Chasteberry, evening primrose
Ringing in the ears	Ginkgo
Seasonal affective disorder	St. John's wort
Shingles	Capsicum
Sore throat	Licorice, marshmallow, mullein
Stuffy nose	Echinacea
Tonsillitis	Goldenseal, astragalus, echinacea
Toothache	Willow, clove oil
Ulcers	Aloe, licorice
Varicosities	Bilberry, horse chestnut
Yeast infection	Garlic, goldenseal, pau d'arco

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Circle #10; see card pg 51



DID YOU KNOW?

The native Americans used echinacea more than any other plant for its medicinal properties. They discovered the roots were effective in healing snakebites as well as poisonous insect bites. They also used the juice to heal burns and in traditional "sweat" rituals. Throughout American history, echinacea has been used by herbalists for its healing properties. Echinacea is still highly regarded by herbalists for its blood purifying and antibiotic properties.

Just one of the interesting and useful facts found on the outside, and printed inside every one of our beautifully illustrated packets.



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Circle #2; see card pg 51

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The Secrets of Saffron

Prized since prehistory, this golden, precious spice is the epitome of an artisanal treat.

By Theresa O'Shea

The temptation to mess with the world's priciest spice will always prove too strong for some. With the current retail price at \$1,500 to \$5,000 a pound, even a tiny amount of tampering can rake in a tidy profit. Ten years ago in Bradford, England, tests revealed that almost a quarter of saffron on sale had been adulterated. Importers had diluted the precious scarlet stigmas by mixing in worthless yellow stamens and adding artificial coloring. Worldwide, it is estimated that 5 to 8 percent of the spice is tainted in this and other ways.

But what makes saffron so expensive in the first place? Each purple flower of the *Crocus sativus* plant produces three trumpet stigmas of golden red. One pound of saffron requires

50,000 to 75,000 of the blossoms and 70,000 to 200,000 of the dried threads—and a lot of patience and dexterity. There are no shortcuts, no machines to ease the load. It's a family affair, all done by hand much as it was hundreds of years ago, from the planting and the picking to the plucking and the toasting. And it's a race against the clock. During harvest time (from late October to mid-November), the blossoms must be picked between sunrise and 10 a.m., and the stigmas removed immediately before they disintegrate into a sticky mess. Drying methods vary, but in Spain they are toasted in a sieve over charcoal embers before being put into airtight containers and stored in a cool, dark place. An artisanal spice, if ever there were one.

You can use much less saffron than most recipes call for. Turn to Page 36 for recipes to get you started. Also, we have two bonus saffron recipes online at www.herbcompanion.com/saffron.



Ancestral Spice

Turn out a tin of saffron onto your palm. Admire the fragile tangle of deep red threads. Hold it up to your nose and inhale its delicate but distinctive perfume—hay-like, honeyed, bitter-sweet. What you are contemplating is not only spice-as-work-of-art, spice-as-labor-of-love, but also spice-as-ancient-history—even prehistory. Cave art in present-day Iraq shows that 50,000 years ago, our ancestors used saffron pigments to paint their beasts yellow. It was the ancient Minoans, however, who first cultivated the wild crocus some 3,500 years ago—as evidenced by the saffron frescoes found on the island of Santorini. One painting shows young girls and monkeys picking the blossoms under the watchful eye of a goddess; another depicts a woman using saffron to treat a bleeding foot.

In the Old Testament, saffron is among the sweet-smelling spices in the Song of Solomon. Cleopatra used it as an aphrodisiac, a perfume and a tanning agent. In Greek mythology, a love affair gone bad between the nymph Smilax and mortal Krokus ended with him being turned into the plant bearing his name. The Greeks and Romans used the spice to dye their clothes (and hair!); to freshen up their public squares and theaters; to embellish their wine; and as an offering to their gods. When Buddha Siddhartha died, his followers dyed their robes with pungent saffron.

When all the flowers in your garden are dying and succumbing to early frosts, imagine waking up to a burst of bright purple, yellow and crimson. Imagine, too, the money you will save by growing, harvesting and toasting your very own saffron.

Saffron the Healer

Since just about forever, saffron seems to have been regarded as something of a panacea. Egyptian physicians used it to treat stomach upsets; Pliny the Elder rated it for everything from insomnia, hangovers and toothache to bruising, anxiety and menstrual pains; and in Tudor England, it was prized as a Prozac-like pick-me-up. The philosopher-cum-scientist Francis Bacon raved about the stuff: “Saffron ... removes melancholy and uneasiness, revives the brain, renders the mind cheerful, and generates boldness.” Liberal use of the spice in “sweetmeats and broth,” he reckoned, was what made the English so “spritely.”

In Eastern medicines, too, saffron played—and still plays—a star role. Ayurvedic texts prescribe the “drug” for colds and coughs, flatulence, urinary problems, acne and other skin disorders. And for menstrual cramps, how about warm milk flushed with saffron and sweetened with a little honey? So simple, so soothing. Sufferers of arthritis may also find that saffron milk eases their aches and pains. Even Western medicine has started to take saffron seriously, with recent studies suggesting that it may be useful in treating cancer and heart disease, and in slowing down blindness.

Saffron Skirmishes

Looks good, smells good, tastes good, does good; it’s not hard to see how the demand—and the price—for such a wonder substance could skyrocket. Phoenician traders first brought saffron to Europe but after the fall of the Roman Empire, cultivation stopped. Then came the Moors. From the 8th century onward, they invaded and settled in North Africa, Spain, Portugal, parts of France and Sicily, bringing with them loads of foodstuffs and crops—including *C. sativus*. The Arabic love of the spice rubbed off into local cuisines—eventually giving us saffron-gilded dishes such as Spanish paella, French bouillabaisse, Italian risotto, and Moroccan tagine.

When the Black Death struck in the 14th century, demand for the spice really went through the roof. Widely used to treat the disease, saffron now had to be imported from the East and shipped into Central Europe from places like Rhodes and

Kashmir Saffron Tea

Saffron tea is said to be good for colds, coughs and low spirits, among other things.

3 cups water

1 cinnamon stick

4 to 5 saffron threads

3 bruised cardamom pods

2 tablespoons flaked almonds

Honey, to taste

1 Put water and spices in pan and bring to a boil.

2 Lower the heat and simmer for 30 minutes.

3 Pour tea, add some flaked almonds and stir.

4 Add honey to taste.



Povy Kendal Atchison

Venice. Conflicts between noblemen and the merchants were common and throughout the 1300s the saffron trade went hand-in-hand with mass piracy and theft.

As a result of all this hassle, Basel (and later Nuremberg) decided to grow their own, which put a stop to piracy—but not to adulteration. Unscrupulous dealers tried all sorts of tricks: lacing the powdered spice with turmeric; mixing the threads with safflower stigmas and marigold petals; adding red-dyed silk fibers; and upping the weight by soaking the filaments in honey or glycerin. Finally, enough was enough. The authorities enacted the *Safranschou* code. From then on, anyone caught corrupting saffron would be fined, imprisoned or even executed—and rather creatively at that. In Nuremberg in 1444, one chap was roasted over a fire of his own saffron, while two others were buried alive with the dodgy merchandise.

The More Things Change ...

A form of the *Safranschou* code is still with us in the International Standard Organization (ISO), a quality-control body that has set standards in color, flavor and labeling since 1993. Anything earning a score of 190 is classified as Grade 1 saffron. As a customer, this is what you're looking for.

A Spaniard will say the best saffron comes from Spain, an Iranian from Iran, and an Indian from Kashmir. Spanish saffron is prized for its delicate color and mellow flavor, while saffron from Iran (the producer of more than 90 percent of the world's supply) and Kashmir is said to be more intense and pungent.

Homegrown: Is it Possible?

C. sativus needs hot, dry summers and cold winters and will be hardy in the United States in Zones 6 to 9. If the bulbs—called corms—are planted around September, they should bloom in late fall of the following year. The soil needs to be fairly sandy to allow good drainage and corms should be planted two to three inches deep and two to three inches apart. Because it is absolutely essential that they don't sit in wet ground during their dormant period (April to September), plant the

bulbs in containers that can be moved indoors. How many do you need? One flower produces three threads—roughly the amount you need per person per dish. So if a family of four eats a saffron-based dish once a month, do the math: You'll need 48 plants.

Cooking with Saffron

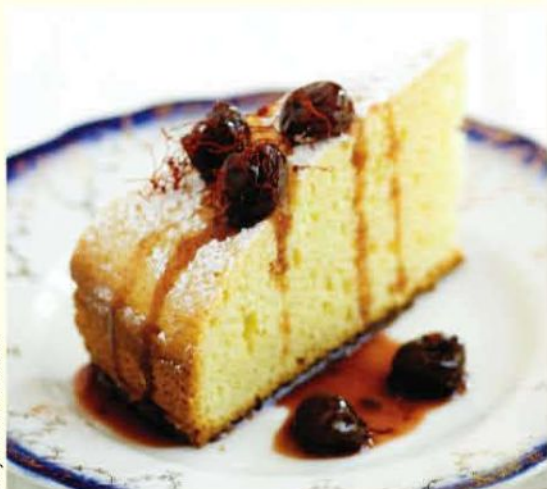
Because of its high price, a mystique has grown up around saffron, making us think we need to be some kind of cutting-edge chef to handle it properly. This is not true. Do not be afraid of it. The secrets of the spice are there for anyone to unwrap, though you will need to experiment: to get used to handling and preparing it, to get a taste and a nose for its singular flavor and aroma, to get a feel for the right quantity and strength.

The other thing to remember is that a little goes a very long way. Some recipes call for a whole teaspoon of the stuff. Saffron is a subtle spice and you just do not need this much. Apart from making it costly to use, overkill will result in a bitter, metallic tang. An \$8, 1-gram jar with around 450 threads is enough for a whole handful of dishes and cakes and teas. My Spanish husband (who learned from his mother) uses no more than 10 to 12 strands for a six-person paella. In this rice dish, the spice provides a background note to other complex flavors, while in cakes and sauces, for example, it is the floral, honeyed tones of the saffron that dominate.

To bring out the full flavor of the spice, grind the threads and/or steep them in a little warm water, milk or other cooking liquid. Twenty minutes to two hours is good. Some recipes say to soak overnight. You can use "instant" powdered saffron, but you'll lose out on some of the magic.

The more confident you become, the more you can incorporate saffron into your everyday kitchen. Throw a few threads into your stock, blend into mayonnaise, drizzle over poached fruit, add to a glaze for roast meat. And try these recipes. 🌿

Theresa O'Shea is a British freelance journalist who lives in the south of Spain and adores Spanish cooking.



Festive saffron baked goods are popular in Sweden, and also in Cornwall, England.

Saffron Cake

Yellow saffron cakes and buns symbolize the sunshine in the long winter months in Sweden. Lussekats are festive yeasty buns served on and around Saint Lucy's day on December 13, for example.

- 6 ounces butter
- Pinch saffron
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ½ cup warm water
- Breadcrumbs
- 2 eggs
- 1½ cups sugar, to taste
- 4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- ¾ cup milk
- Powdered sugar, for garnish

- 1 Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
- 2 Melt butter and let it cool.
- 3 Crush saffron threads in a mortar and pestle; muddle with 1 teaspoon sugar. Steep 20 minutes in warm water.
- 4 Butter a 9-inch springform cake pan and sprinkle breadcrumbs around the pan.
- 5 Beat eggs and sugar, then add saffron mixture.
- 6 In a separate bowl, mix flour with baking powder. Fold into the batter with a metal spoon.
- 7 Bake near bottom of the oven for 40 to 50 minutes.
- 8 Let cake cool, then turn out on wire tray to sift powdered sugar over the top.

Seafood Paella for 4 Hungry People

Paella can be made with chicken or rabbit, seafood, a mixture of both, or with a variety of vegetables only. However you make it, the basic method and the saffron ratio is the same. If you are served bright yellow paella that stains your fingers bright yellow, food coloring is the culprit.

- 1 pound mussels
- ¼ pound small prawns
- 2 small squid or ½ pound squid rings
- ½ pound baby clams
- 8 langoustines or large prawns
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- ½ red pepper, cut into strips
- 3 cloves garlic
- 3 peeled, chopped tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 4 cups rice
- 8 to 12 cups Fish Stock (see recipe on Page 37)
- 12 saffron threads
- Salt, to taste

- 1 Clean mussels and boil in a pan until they open. Strain, remove one half of the shell, set aside and reserve the water for Fish Stock. Peel prawns and set the leftovers (heads, tails and skins) aside for Fish Stock, too.
- 2 Heat olive oil in a paella pan or large skillet and lightly fry squid, langoustines and peeled prawns. Remove from pan and set aside.
- 3 Sauté onion, red pepper, garlic, tomatoes and paprika for 7 or 8 minutes.
- 4 Add rice, season, cook for a minute or two, stirring all the time. Add stock (start with 8 cups) and the saffron.
- 5 Bring to a boil, add squid and clams and *do not* stir again. Cook over a high flame

Saffron Rice Pudding

Known as kheer in India and Pakistan and as sholeh zard in Iran, saffron-infused rice pudding is a dessert fit for a queen. Once you've made it, you won't want rice pudding any other way.

- 8 to 10 saffron threads
- ½ cup warm milk
- ½ cup basmati rice
- 2 tablespoons ghee or butter
- 2 tablespoons flaked almonds or yellow sultanas OR 1 tablespoon chopped cashews or sliced pistachios
- 4 cups milk
- 3 bruised cardamom pods
- ½ cup sugar

- 1 Soak saffron threads in ½ cup milk for 20 minutes.
- 2 Rinse rice until it runs clear.
- 3 Melt ghee or butter in a skillet (if using butter, add a little olive or vegetable oil to stop butter from burning) and toast the nuts

- or sultanas. Remove from skillet.
- 4 Heat 4 cups milk in a separate, heavy-bottomed pan.
- 5 Add rice to the skillet, stirring for 2 or 3 minutes.
- 6 Add rice and cardamom to boiling milk. Turn down heat and cook for 15 minutes or until half of the milk has reduced.
- 7 Add sugar, saffron and half of the nuts. Keep cooking on low heat until all the milk has been absorbed.
- 8 Serve hot or cold, topped with remaining nuts.

Note: If you want your rice pudding runny, you'll need to add more milk during cooking or when serving. You can also substitute some or all of the milk with water.

for 10 minutes before adding the prawns, langoustines and mussels.

6 Keep cooking over a fierce heat until nearly all the stock is absorbed. You may need to add more stock and adjust for salt.

7 When rice is almost done, remove from heat and cover with newspaper or a damp cloth for 5 minutes. The rice will continue to cook so make sure it's still ever-so-slightly soupy.

Note: You can dissolve a fish stock cube in 3 cups of boiling water in lieu of making the Fish Stock. Even if you don't have fresh mussels or a fish head, use the prawn leftovers and vegetables to add natural flavor.

Fish Stock

2 tablespoons olive oil

Prawn heads, tails and skins
(from the paella prawns)

1 onion, chopped

1 leek, chopped

1 fish head

Mussel water (from paella step 1)

1 Heat olive oil in a large saucepan, the

same one you will use for the stock.

2 Sauté prawn leftovers in the oil for a few minutes.

3 Add onion and leek and continue to fry. When they start to brown, toss in the fish head. Then add mussel water and fill the rest of the way with water.

4 Bring to a boil, cover and cook over medium heat for 30 minutes.



A close-up photograph of a white ceramic bowl with a gold rim and handles, filled with a hearty soup. The soup contains chunks of white chicken, sliced carrots, leeks, and green leafy vegetables in a clear broth. The bowl sits on a matching saucer with a gold rim and a small butterfly illustration. In the background, a glass of white wine and a slice of bread are visible on a white tablecloth.

Wholesome & Hearty

By Kris Wetherbee
Photography by
Howard Lee Puckett
Styling by Judy Feagin and
Virginia Cravens-Houston

Warm up your winter with these seven herb-infused soup and bread recipes. Nothing takes the chill out of a dark evening like a steaming bowl of stew and a fresh loaf of bread.

The winter forecast calls for deliciously healthy, hearty soups and stews, especially since soup season involves flavorful herbs such as rosemary, sage, oregano and thyme. Virtually any kind of culinary herb is suitable for soup—either featured as a solo act or as a tasty combination of herbal flavors. From the simple to the sublime, seasoning herbs are as foundational to a soup's overall flavor as a tasty stock.

A steaming bowl of homemade soup can be simmered to perfection and then served, or prepared the day before so it's ready and waiting to be served at your convenience. In fact, homemade soups and stews are the kind of comfort meals that actually taste better when made a day or two in advance, refrigerated and then reheated just before serving. Allowing the ingredients more

time to marry is an excellent way to maximize their flavors for an even greater taste sensation.

What's more, homemade soups and stews provide the whole-food essentials needed to energize and replenish your body during winter, especially with ingredients such as complex carbohydrates and complete proteins in the form of legumes, whole grains, lean meats, roots and other fresh winter vegetables. So go ahead and simmer up a delicious dimension of herbal-infused soups and stews. The aroma alone is guaranteed to arouse anyone's appetite. 🍲

Kris Wetherbee is a contributing editor to The Herb Companion. She cooks and gardens in western Oregon.

Chicken and Parsley Noodle Soup

SERVES 4

2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
1 medium onion, chopped
2 carrots, cut into ½-inch-thick slices
3 celery stalks, sliced
5½ cups chicken broth
3 cups chopped cooked chicken
½ teaspoon fresh thyme leaves
½ teaspoon chopped fresh rosemary
½ teaspoon chopped fresh sage
Parsley Noodles (recipe at right)
2 cups baby spinach
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

1 Heat oil over medium-high heat in a large Dutch oven. Add onions and sauté 5 to 8 minutes. Add carrots and celery and sauté 3 minutes.

2 Add chicken broth, chicken, thyme, rosemary and sage. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 20 to 30 minutes.

3 Add noodles to soup mixture. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, for 10 minutes. Stir in spinach and cook 5 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Ladle into individual soup bowls.

Parsley Noodles

1¼ cups all-purpose flour
½ teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons minced fresh Italian parsley
1 large egg, beaten
2 to 3 tablespoons milk or cold water

1 Combine flour, salt and parsley in a large bowl. Make a well in the center. Add egg and milk; stir together until dough forms a ball.

2 Turn dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead a dozen times. Roll dough into a large rectangle, about 9 by 12 inches. Cut into ½-inch strips, then cut the strips into 2- to 3-inch pieces to form noodles.

Note: You could also use a pasta maker. Just follow the manufacturer's directions.

Arugula, Potato, Chive and Leek Soup

SERVES 4 TO 6

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cups sliced leeks
- ½ teaspoon salt, or to taste
- ⅛ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste
- 1½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, coarsely chopped (about 4 cups)
- 4 cups chicken broth
- 4 ounces arugula leaves, chopped (about 2 cups loosely packed)
- ¼ cup minced fresh chives
- Sour cream or yogurt (optional)

- 1** In a large pot, heat oil and sauté leeks for 5 minutes or until softened. Add salt, pepper, potatoes and chicken broth.
- 2** Bring to a boil, then simmer, covered, for 20 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
- 3** Place half or all of the potato-leek mixture—depending on whether you like your soup to be slightly chunky or fully smooth—and puree in a blender, food processor or with a hand mixer until smooth.
- 4** Add the puree, arugula and chives to the pot and simmer, stirring constantly, for 2 to 3 minutes.
- 5** Ladle into individual soup bowls and serve with a dollop of sour cream or yogurt, if desired.

Herbal Cabbage Soup with Turkey Sausage

SERVES 4 TO 6

- 1 pound turkey Italian sausage, chopped
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup water
- 2 cups chopped carrots
- 4 cups cubed potatoes (Yukon Gold, white or red)
- 8 cups chopped green cabbage (about ½ head)
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon thyme
- ½ teaspoon cumin
- 2 cups chopped fresh tomatoes
- ¼ cup tomato paste
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- ⅓ cup finely chopped, lightly packed fresh basil

- 1** In a large pot on medium heat, cook sausage and onions about 10 minutes, until onions are soft and sausage is cooked through; drain any fat. Add broth, water, carrots, potatoes, cabbage and next 3 herbs. Bring to a boil, stir, then simmer, covered, for about 45 minutes or until potatoes and carrots are done.
- 2** Stir in tomatoes and tomato paste. Add salt and pepper. Simmer, covered, for about 15 minutes. Turn off heat and stir in basil.

4 Ways to Make Fabulous Soup

The quality of stock or broth can make a difference in the overall flavor of a soup or stew. A good stock imparts a depth that can never be achieved from a water-based soup. While bouillon cubes or granules may serve in a pinch, ready-made stock (usually sold in cartons by the quart) or homemade stock is always better.

Poultry, beef, fish or vegetables serve as the foundational ingredients for a tasty soup stock. All it takes is a pot of simmering water, plus meat, bones, a sliced

onion, a couple of celery stalks, a carrot or two, a bay leaf and any other vegetables or seasonings that sound appealing. You can also make a specialty seafood stock by using a combination of clean fish heads, shells, bones and trimmings.

Rev up the flavor of your homemade soup with instant flavor enhancers. Try a dollop or two of pesto, nut butter, miso, tomato paste or honey. Or add depth with white or red wine, herbal vinegar, Worcestershire sauce or hot sauce.

Garnishes are another way to enhance the quality of a soup. Croutons or oyster crackers used to garnish chowders are a classic. But why stop there? Try topping soup with shredded cheese, a dollop of yogurt or swirl low-fat ricotta cheese into the soup. How about a sprinkling of fresh herbs, toasted nuts or seeds?

Prepared soup can be refrigerated for several days, but wait to add any cream or garnishes until the day the soup is reheated and served.

Beef and Root Vegetable Stew with Rosemary Dumplings

SERVES 4 TO 6

2 pounds beef stew meat
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
Salt and pepper
1 tablespoon olive oil
5 cups beef broth, divided
1 bay leaf
3 cups cubed sweet potatoes (about 2 medium sweet potatoes)
2 cups cubed white or russet potatoes (about 1 large potato)
1 cup chopped celery stalks with leaves
3 carrots, sliced about ¾-inch-thick
1 large or 2 small parsnips, chopped
1 small rutabaga or 1 medium turnip, chopped
1 large leek, white and palest green parts only, chopped
2 sprigs fresh thyme
Rosemary Dumpling Dough (recipe at right)
Thyme and rosemary sprigs, for garnish

1 Sprinkle beef with flour, salt and pepper, stirring well to coat. Cook beef in batches in hot oil in a large Dutch oven over medium-high heat 7 to 10 minutes, stirring until browned on all sides. Add 2 cups beef broth and bay leaf. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 1½ hours.

2 Add the remaining 3 cups beef broth, vegetables and fresh thyme sprigs. Bring back to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 15 to 20 minutes or until vegetables are almost tender. Drop dumpling dough by 9 rounded tablespoons onto hot stew. Cover and cook for 12 to 15 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center of a dumpling comes out clean.

Rosemary Dumpling Dough

1 cup all-purpose flour
1½ teaspoons baking powder
¼ teaspoon salt
1 tablespoon butter, chopped
1 tablespoon fresh snipped rosemary
½ cup milk

1 Stir together flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Cut in butter until the mixture is fine and crumbly. Stir in rosemary. Stir in milk to make a soft dough, adding more milk if needed.



European Peasant Bread

These are the round, whole-grain loaves of rural Europe. MAKES 3 LOAVES

1½ tablespoons granulated yeast (1½ packets)

1½ tablespoons salt

3 cups lukewarm water

½ cup rye flour

½ cup whole-wheat flour

5½ cups unbleached all-purpose flour

Cornmeal, for the pizza peel

- 1** Combine yeast and salt with the water in a 5-quart bowl, or a lidded (not airtight) food container. Let stand 5 minutes.
- 2** Mix in remaining dry ingredients without kneading, using a spoon, a 14-cup capacity food processor (with dough attachment), or a heavy-duty stand mixer (with dough hook). If you're not using a machine, you may need to use wet hands to incorporate the last bit of flour.
- 3** Cover (not airtight), and allow to rest at room temperature until the dough rises and collapses (or flattens on top), approximately 2 hours.
- 4** The dough can be used after the initial rise, but is easier to handle cold.

Refrigerate in a lidded (not airtight) container and use over the next 14 days.

5 On baking day, dust the surface of the refrigerated dough with flour and cut off a 1-pound (grapefruit-size) piece. Dust with more flour and quickly shape it into a ball by stretching the surface of the dough around to the bottom on all four sides, rotating the ball a quarter-turn as you go. Allow to rest and rise on a cornmeal-covered pizza peel for 40 minutes.

6 Twenty minutes before baking time, preheat oven to 450 degrees, with a baking stone placed on the middle rack. Place an empty broiler tray on any other shelf that won't interfere with the rising bread.

7 Sprinkle the loaf liberally with flour and slash a cross, "scallop" or tic-tac-toe pattern into the top, using a serrated bread knife. Leave the flour in place for baking; tap some of it off before slicing.

8 Slide the loaf directly onto the hot stone. Pour 1 cup of hot tap water into the broiler tray, and quickly close the oven door. Bake 30 to 35 minutes, or until the top crust is deeply browned and very firm. Smaller or larger loaves will require adjustments in baking time.

9 Cool before slicing or eating.



The European Peasant Bread (left) and the Portuguese Corn Bread (right) are delicious with chive butter. Find the recipe on our website.



ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Find bonus soup and herbal butter recipes at www.herbcompanion.com/winter-soup.

Seafood Cioppino

SERVES 4

12 sea scallops (or 1 pound bay scallops)
12 jumbo raw shrimp
12 mussels
1 pound white fish fillets (cod, tilapia or red snapper)
3 tablespoons olive oil
1 red onion, chopped
1 to 2 serrano peppers, seeded and finely chopped
1 fennel bulb, chopped
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 orange or yellow sweet bell pepper, seeded and chopped
1 cup dry white wine
2 cups fish stock
1 (28-ounce) can crushed tomatoes

1 bay leaf
¼ teaspoon dried thyme
¼ teaspoon dried oregano
½ tablespoon snipped fresh rosemary
2 cups cubed zucchini (about 1 medium)
Salt and pepper, to taste
2 tablespoons fresh snipped basil or parsley, to garnish

1 Prepare seafood: if using sea scallops, cut them in half; peel and devein the shrimp; scrub and debeard the mussels; remove bones from fish and cut into bite-sized pieces. Keep prepared seafood chilled until ready for use.

2 Heat oil in a large heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven. Add onion, hot peppers and fennel;

sauté for 3 minutes or until onions are soft.

3 Add garlic and sweet peppers; sauté for 2 to 3 minutes more. Add wine, stock, crushed tomatoes, bay leaf, thyme and oregano.

4 Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer, covered, for 45 minutes to blend flavors.

5 Add fresh rosemary and zucchini and simmer for 10 minutes more. Add scallops to the pot and simmer for several minutes, then add shrimp and simmer for 3 to 5 minutes more.

6 Add mussels and fish; simmer several more minutes or until mussels open and fish is cooked through. (Discard any unopened mussels.)

7 Season to taste. To serve, sprinkle with chopped fresh basil or parsley and serve with garlic bread or grilled focaccia bread.

Broa (Portuguese Corn Bread)

Broa is a very rustic recipe from the Portuguese countryside. MAKES 3 LOAVES

1½ tablespoons granulated yeast
1½ tablespoons salt
3 cups lukewarm water (100 to 110 degrees)
1½ cups stone-ground or standard cornmeal
5 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
Cornmeal, for pizza peel and dusting the top

1 Combine yeast and salt with water in a 5-quart bowl, or a lidded (not airtight) food container. Let stand 5 minutes.

2 Mix in remaining dry ingredients without kneading, using a spoon, a 14-cup capacity food processor (with dough attachment), or a heavy-duty stand mixer (with dough hook). If you're not using a machine, you may need to use wet hands to incorporate the last bit of flour.

3 Cover (not airtight), and allow to rest at room temperature until the dough rises and collapses (or flattens on top), about 2 hours.

4 The dough can be used immediately after the initial rise, though it is easier to handle when cold. Refrigerate in a lidded (not airtight) container and use over the next 10 days.

5 On baking day, dust the surface of the refrigerated dough with flour and cut off a 1-pound (grapefruit-size) piece. Dust the piece with more flour and quickly shape it into a ball by stretching the surface of the dough around to the bottom on all four sides, rotating the ball a quarter-turn as you go. Flatten slightly and allow to rest and rise on a cornmeal-covered pizza peel for 40 minutes.

6 Twenty minutes before baking time, preheat oven to 450 degrees, with a baking stone placed on the middle rack. Place an

empty broiler pan on any other shelf that won't interfere with the rising bread.

7 Sprinkle the loaf liberally with flour and slash a cross, "scallop" or tic-tac-toe pattern into the top, using a serrated bread knife. Leave the flour in place for baking; tap some of it off before eating.

8 Slide the loaf directly onto the hot stone. Pour 1 cup of hot tap water into the broiler pan, and quickly close the oven door. Bake for 30 to 35 minutes, until deeply browned and firm. Smaller or larger loaves will require adjustments in baking time.

9 Cool before slicing or eating.

Broa and European Peasant Bread are from Artisan Bread in Five Minutes a Day by Jeff Hertzberg. Copyright © 2007 by the author and reprinted by permission of Thomas Dunne Books, an imprint of St. Martin's Press, LLC.

An aerial photograph of a well-maintained garden. The garden is laid out in a geometric, four-square style with four square flower beds, each bordered by a low, rounded hedge. The beds are separated by a brick-paved path that forms a central square. Two wooden benches are placed on the path, one on the left and one on the right. The garden is surrounded by lush green trees and shrubs. In the background, a white house with a brick chimney and a small white gazebo are visible.

12 Herbs
for the

Colonial Garden

The Benjamin Powell House garden is laid out in the geometric, four-square style that was common in Colonial America.



By Jeanne Grunert

The Colonial garden served as the apothecary, perfumery and spice rack for the average household. Gardens graced both the farmyard and the city home. The first Colonial herb gardens were primarily kitchen gardens planted with herbs, fruits, flowers and vegetables. Later, as the colonists' wealth increased, separate gardens were sometimes added to grow only flowers for pleasure, such as Thomas Jefferson's flower walk at Monticello or the formal beds at Mount Vernon, George Washington's home.

Herbs for Health and Wealth

Herbs served many purposes. In an age when meat was the primary fare, herbs enlivened meals and provided added nutrition. The plants also brightened wardrobes. According to Laura Viancour, Colonial Williamsburg's manager of garden programs, tansy, parsley, madder, walnut and bayberry were just a few of the many plants used to create dyes that would change last year's frock into this year's fashion for the frugal Colonial woman.

Meet the Colonial Garden

In their book *Dooryard Garden: Colonial Herbs*, New England Herb Society of America members Jane O'Sullivan and Rhonda Haavisto write that most New England colonial gardeners situated their gardens on a southern exposure to take

advantage of the warmth and full sunlight, both essential to raising healthy herbs. Fences encircled gardens to keep livestock and animals away from precious plants. What would you find growing in the Colonial herb garden? According to Viancour, the following five herbs were found in the average Colonial garden. These multitasking herbs will work just as hard in your home as they did in the Colonial home, making them useful and beautiful additions to your garden.

Parsley

Parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) garnishes many a restaurant plate today, but in Colonial times, cooks seasoned food with parsley and prized the herb as a health tonic. Viancour also believes parsley was used as a dye, producing a green color. A little parsley goes a long way, so for most modern home gardens, one plant provides sufficient fresh parsley to enjoy in culinary dishes as well as for drying and storing.

Sage

Sage (*Salvia officinalis*) enhances the flavor of game meats and stews, two staples of the era. Sage was also used historically as a medicinal herb. "Sage has known antimicrobial properties and it is anti-inflammatory," says Keri Marshall, N.D., medical



Colonial Williamsburg Foundation (3)



director at Gaia Herbs. Marshall says a controlled clinical study using a placebo, double-blind methodology indicated a commercial throat spray made with sage was effective in treating acute viral pharyngitis, thus giving an intriguing glimpse into research that backs up Colonial belief.

Today, sage is grown more for its culinary and ornamental use. It is not recommended that home gardeners harvest and use sage for medicinal purposes. To grow sage for ornamental or culinary use, you'll need bright, full light and well-drained soil. Harvest leaves sparingly the first year for a bumper crop the second.

Rosemary

Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*) provided a tasty accent to lamb, game, and stew dishes and was grown as a culinary herb. As the herb of remembrance, rosemary was added to wedding cakes or puddings. Rosemary needs full sun and warm temperatures. It prefers well-drained, alkaline soil. In northern climates, remove rosemary plants from the garden, replant in pots, and keep indoors until all danger of frost is past to keep snow and ice from killing rosemary plants in the wintertime.

Thyme

Thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*), as well as lemon thyme, adorned the Colonial garden. Thyme flavored foods and added another herb to the Colonial family's medicine chest.



The John Blair House Garden (left) at Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia shows the living walls and geometric layouts common to Colonial gardens. Lavender (below) and sage (far left) flourish in the gardens at Colonial Williamsburg, as well.

Thyme requires sandy, dry soil and can be tucked among rocks and in spots in the garden in which few other plants flourish. Give it full sun and tend it carefully, and soon thyme will cover the area.

Lavender

In an age when strong and unpleasant odors were common, sweetly scented herbs were prized. Lavender (*Lavandula* spp.) was often used to scent clothing. Dried lavender would be tucked among stored clothes to refresh them by infusing the garments with their scent. To grow lavender in the home garden today, start plants from seeds or cuttings, or purchase plants at your local nursery or garden center. Lavender needs full sun and well-drained soil. It's easy to dry and the dried herb may be used in sachets or potpourri.

Other Useful Herbs

Bee balm (*Monarda didyma*) also played an important part in Colonial history, serving as a tea substitute after the Boston Tea Party, when black tea imported from England was difficult or impossible to obtain. Bee balm is medicinal, too, since an active ingredient, thymol, also found in thyme, offers antibacterial and antimicrobial benefits and is added to many modern commercial mouthwash preparations.

Other herbs served dual purposes in the Colonial household,

too. Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) was grown for its pleasing scent and yellow hue for dying. Mint (*Mentha ×piperita*) was grown for its refreshing scent and culinary purposes; mint tea remains a popular herbal beverage today. The humble woodland violet (*Viola odorata*) not only graced the garden with cheerful flowers, it added a sweet scent to water used for washing. Kathleen Halloran, one of *The Herb Companion's* contributing editors, outlines how to create your own Colonial garden on Page 48. Halloran adds wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*), feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*) and yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) to the list of Colonial favorites. Wormwood is a perennial herb that is perfect for the garden—it can produce a mass of silvery-gray aromatic foliage, which makes a great background against which to show off other flowers in the garden. Feverfew, the seeds of which would have been brought over on the boat from the Old World, has knee-high, cheerful perennial flowers that are the source of a potent traditional headache remedy. Flowering yarrow found its way into Colonial gardens for its usefulness in treating wounds.

Using Herbs Today

Check out our coverage of Colonial Williamsburg on Page 52 and our plans for your own Colonial garden on Page 48 for inspiration and ideas. You can also visit Mount Vernon or re-created gardens throughout New England. As far as using Colonial herbs, keep in mind that medicinal herbs must be used with care and preferably under the guidance of a naturopathic doctor or herbalist. It's best to use a standardized product from a reputable company rather than harvesting your own backyard herbs, which may vary in quality and strength and cause potential harm. Be sure to tell your doctor if you use any herbal extracts, since some may interact with prescription medications or cause potential side effects. The herbs found in the gardens of Colonial America would be equally at home in your backyard today. 🌿

Jeanne Grunert is the author of *Get Your Hands Dirty: A Beginner's Guide to Gardening* (Lulu Enterprises, 2010).

Get the Colonial Look

Go old-school with a useful, water-saving Colonial front garden.

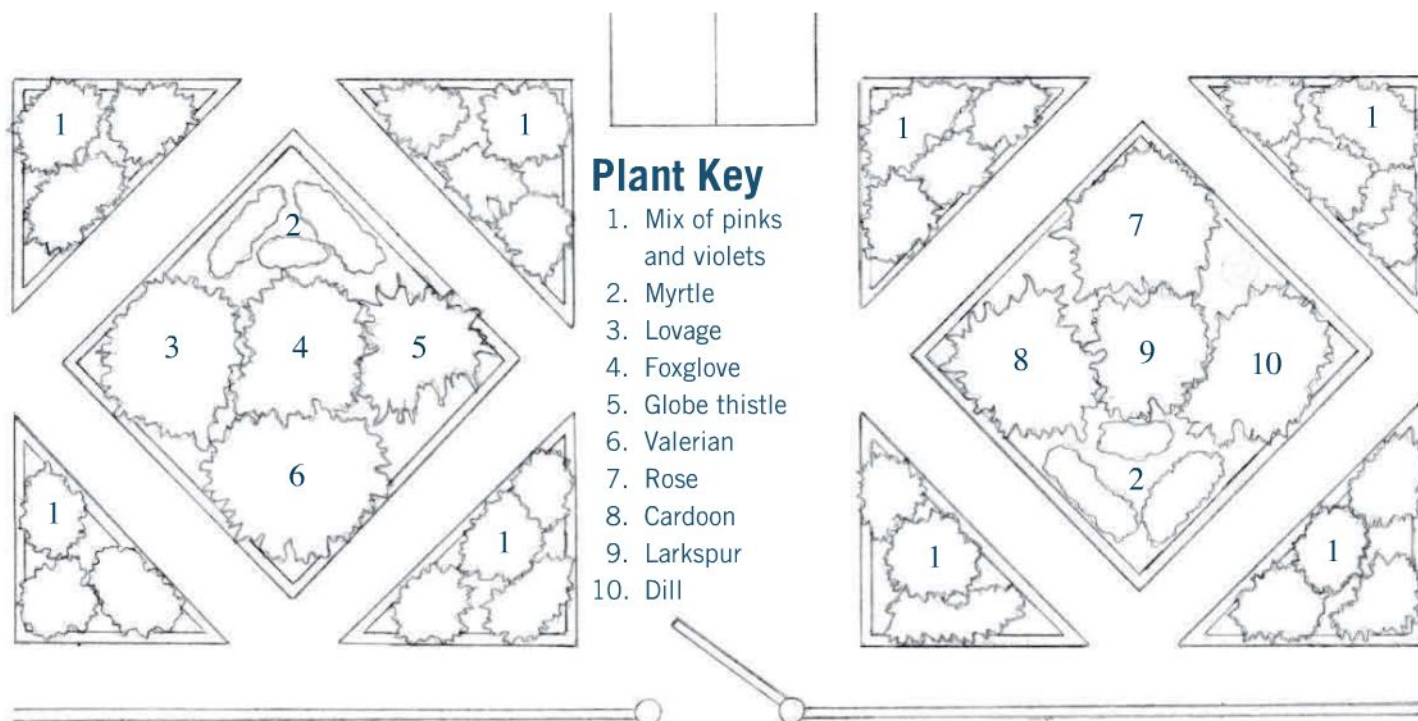
BY KATHLEEN HALLORAN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GAYLE FORD

The even, geometric shapes of a Colonial garden can transform your front yard into a show-stopper. See Page 44 for more images.

Many garden ideas can grow from a study of horticultural history and tradition, and sometimes old ideas can offer solutions to new problems. The herb gardens of Colonial America are a case in point. These tidy, geometric gardens make a wonderful drought-tolerant alternative to a water-sucking front lawn, if they're appropriate to the style of the home and the neighborhood. And even if Colonial isn't your style, you can still find inspiration here.

We filled this front-yard garden with a bevy of old-fashioned, traditional plants (all herbs that would have been grown in the Colonies), including some natives and others that might have been brought over from the Old World and passed around among neighbors. Globe thistle, cardoon, valerian, foxglove, feverfew,



yarrow, pansies and larkspur—these are all plants that are as beloved today as they were a couple of hundred years ago.

We chose a simple, geometric design that is reminiscent of a patchwork quilt pattern the colonists would have been familiar with. We laid a center walkway to the front door with mirrored square beds on either side of it, each of which has a diamond within it for a selection of statuesque plants, with small triangular beds at the corners. Making the walkways a light or contrasting color adds emphasis to the orderly geometry, which is a satisfying framework for the overflowing bounty of a thriving garden.

Prepare for Planting

A simple internet search and online photos of Colonial Williamsburg will give you lots of other ideas for designs and plant choices for your own Colonial garden. Once you've settled on a design that fits your space, in a location that gets full sun or at least six to eight hours of sunlight a day, then you can prepare that site as you would any bed:

Turn over the soil, adding in compost and whatever other amendments you need

to create a nutrient-rich, porous soil that drains adequately. Remove all those pesky rocks and weed it thoroughly. If you've got time, let it lie fallow for a few weeks and repeat the process, getting rid of all the new weeds you created by unearthing weed seeds.

Prepare a list of plant possibilities, and then hunt them down in your local garden centers or from online resources. There are far more options than we can include here. You can find more plant ideas in the article on Page 44, and see all our plant suggestions from this Colonial herbs section in our online plant guide at www.herbcompanion.com/colonialplantlist. Many of these can be grown from seed, but they are also often available as starts from area garden centers, especially those that carry a good herb selection.

You can get your new little plants off to a good start with a squirt of diluted liquid seaweed. Keep your eye on them through their first season of growth, keeping the soil uniformly moist and occasionally applying a good organic fertilizer. The tidy framework of this garden will make keeping it weeded easier because it's a contained space, not a sprawling one.

Tradition Lives

When you grow an herb that dates back to Colonial days, you can have confidence that there's a reason for its survival. Some of these plants have waxed and waned in popularity over time, but they have endured and become garden favorites for generations of gardeners. Many of today's herb gardeners need to grow drought-tolerant plants to save on their water bills; they often want not just bedding plants, but plants that will give back to them in terms of harvesting something for the table, the medicine chest or vases of fresh-cut flowers. The colonists had that same streak of practicality in the plants they chose. The beauty of the plants is a lovely bonus.

And so the old becomes new again, and the circle comes round. Add those touches that make the Colonial garden your own. Surround it with a white picket or wattle fence if you like. Nestle a cloche (an old-fashioned bell jar) in the bed, add a birdhouse or beehive. Bring it alive. 🌿

Kathleen Halloran is a freelance writer and editor living and tending her herbs in beautiful Austin, Texas.



11 Colonial Garden Plants

Pinks (*Dianthus* spp.). Cheerful traditional flowers in a range of pinks, reds and whites. They are low-growing perennials and some annuals that form tidy mounds in the garden.

Violets (*Viola* spp.). To plant near the edges of your garden, choose either the perennial *V. odorata* or some of the readily available annual pansies or Johnny-jump-ups. They'll stay under about 6 inches, adding a bright splash of color without obscuring the view.

Myrtle (*Myrtus communis*). This evergreen shrub can be clipped to form a formal hedge, or left to grow into a more natural shape to enjoy the numerous small white flowers later in the summer.

Lovage (*Levisticum officinale*). This medicinal and culinary herb is a hardy perennial that grows to about 5 feet. It has a celery taste in the stems, leaves and seeds.

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*). Enjoy these beautiful vertical spikes of tubular flowers; don't use it for medicinal purposes, despite its pharmacological history, as it is toxic, even fatal. Foxglove is a tough biennial, flowering in early summer of its second year and reaching 6 feet or more in bloom.

Globe thistle (*Echinops ritro*). The silvery-blue, almost metallic-looking flower balls of this plant provide fascinating texture in the garden, but be sure to cut off the stalks to prevent too much self-seeding; at the end of the season, leave one or two to ripen and spread a bit of seed for next year.

Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*). This hardy perennial, which can reach 4 to 5 feet at its peak, provides roots still used today as a calming tea at bedtime.

Rose (*Rosa* spp.). Try a wonderful old shrub rose such as 'Old Blush', which is drought-tolerant, hardy and quite carefree.

Cardoon (*Cynara cardunculus*). This dramatic plant, related to the artichoke, is usually grown as an annual. It can reach 4 to 5 feet with its purple, thistly flowers or be eaten as a vegetable before the flowers open.

Larkspur (*Delphinium* spp.). These perennial and annual flowers in the but-tercup family have tall flower spikes in intense blue-purple and other colors. They're an old garden favorite, but not to be consumed, as they are toxic.

Dill (*Anethum graveolens*). Simple, useful and beautiful, this biennial herb produces umbels of tiny yellow flowers, usually early in its second year. It reaches about 3 feet and is grown for both its foliage and seed.

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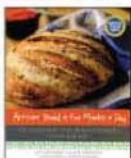
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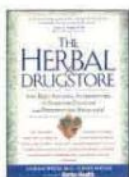
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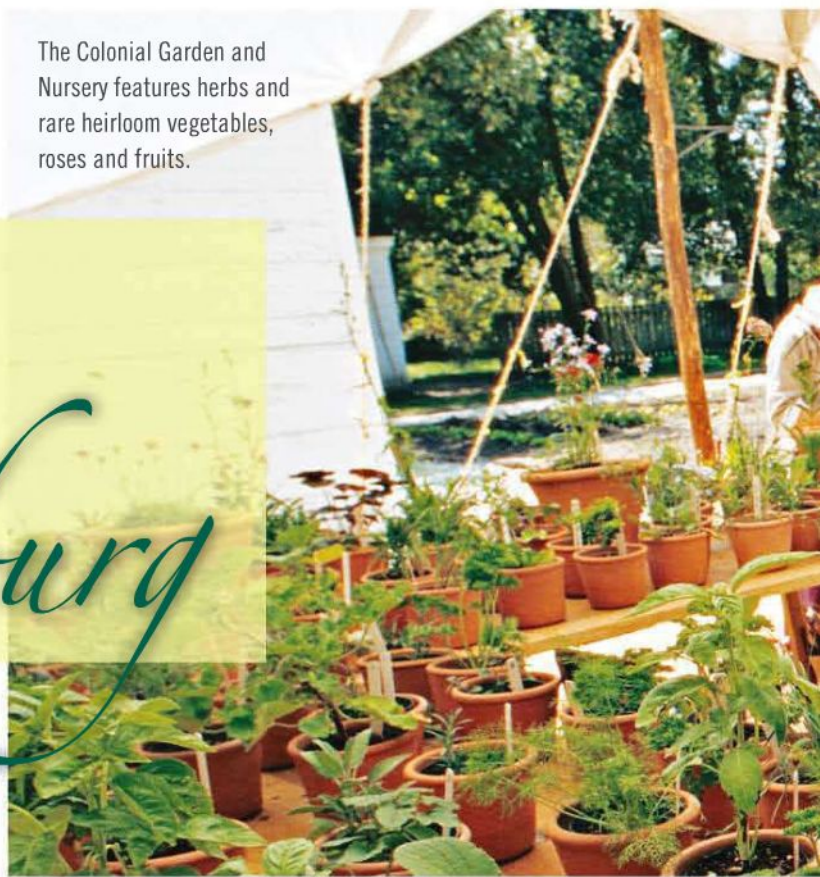
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[Featured Garden]

Colonial Williamsburg

By Letitia L. Star

The Colonial Garden and Nursery features herbs and rare heirloom vegetables, roses and fruits.



There's much to delight the herb lover visiting the historic gardens of Colonial Williamsburg, located in Williamsburg, Virginia, just 150 miles south of Washington, D.C. A former capital of the English Colonies, Colonial Williamsburg was key in our nation's early history. In the historic area, you'll be intrigued by the authentic Colonial gardens and herbs planted alongside restored 18th-century homes and businesses. Herbs brought from England and other European countries were used in cooking, cleaning, medicines, dyes, cosmetics and insecticides. Step into the John Blair House garden (see an image on Page 46) and you'll discover the colors and fragrances of thriving historic herbs and flowers of Colonial America. Indeed a great lover of gardening, John Blair, Sr. resided here in the 1700s. The John Blair House garden is one of 100 historic gardens covering 90 acres in Colonial Williamsburg. The largest living history museum in the United States, the area comes alive with costumed interpreters.

"The herbs in this garden were grown mostly for their fragrances—both cosmetic and insecticidal," says Laura Viancour, Colonial Williamsburg's manager of garden programs. Lavender-scented dusting powder was used for fashionable wigs, for example.

You'll also discover Colonial herb treasures thriving in:

The Governor's Palace: The sumptuous complex of gardens, which resembled an English country estate, included a kitchen garden. Herbs played an important culinary role at the 18th-century table. Viancour observes that horseradish (*Armoracia rusticana*) was cultivated as a digestive aid for consuming meat. Vibrant dried yellow calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) petals were

used to color butter and cheese, and to thicken stews.

Wetherburn's Tavern: The kitchen garden included tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), which was rubbed on furniture to keep it clean and repel insects.

More historic herb gardening: The Colonial Garden and Nursery (see image above), the Benjamin Powell House (see image on Page 44), the James Geddy House, the George Reid House and the George Wythe House. Also visit the Pasteur & Galt Apothecary to learn about 18th-century herbal medicine.

Geometric Gardens

"The four-square garden that was used in Early America was aesthetically pleasing but also functional," Viancour says. "The biggest lesson from these historic gardens is how to take big spaces and break them up into smaller gardens. Herb cultivation doesn't require a big space."

To bring Colonial America into your own herb garden, consider these unusual herbs grown in Colonial Williamsburg.

Costmary (*Tanacetum balsamita*): "This is among my favorite herbs because the willow-shaped leaves are so fragrant," Viancour says. In the 18th century, costmary flavored ale and was believed to repel insects.

Clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*): "This biennial has big fuzzy leaves the first year and pretty flower spike blooms in the second," Viancour says. "They made clary fritters by dipping the leaves in batter and frying them."

Bedstraw (*Galium verum*): "This makes an excellent ground cover," she says. Colonists added bedstraw to mattress stuffing.



Explore (and see how to cultivate) culinary, medicinal and household Colonial herbs.

Colonial Williamsburg Foundation

Colonial Herbal Scents

"The Colonists valued herbs for the aromatic properties and used them to scent perfumes, pomades, water, vinegar and amonia," Viancour says.

Colonial sweet bath. This 18th-century bathing ritual featured herbal extracts of lavender, rosemary, marjoram, jasmine, juniper and more. Also included were flowers and lemon essence.

Colonial sweet bags and potpourri. "Recipes included roses, sweet marjoram, lavender, rosemary, pinks, mint, myrtle, angelica root and orris root," Viancour says.

Colonial perfume. "Orris root also was an ingredient in a 1758 recipe for burning perfume," she says. "Steeped in rosewater, sliced orris root was beaten, mixed with several ingredients and then dried."

Colonial "indoor air fresheners." Lavender, southernwood and wormwood were strewn about on the floor, so when stepped on their scents and insect-repelling properties would be released.

African Herbal Tradition

Approximately half the population in 18th-century Colonial Williamsburg was composed of African-descent slaves, who tended wealthier Virginians' gardens, as well as their own kitchen gardens in the slave quarters. Herbs were part of African healing traditions to inspire health, wealth, luck and happiness. These wellness ablutions also included other plants, roots, trees, minerals and natural waters.

At the Spa of Colonial Williamsburg, the 19th-Century Root and Herbal Spa Experience re-creates the African wellness

More Colonial Herbs

You can cultivate American history right in your own herb bed. For beginner gardeners, Laura Viancour, Colonial Williamsburg's manager of garden programs, recommends nasturtiums (*Tropaeolum majus*) and chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*).

"In the 18th century, people ate the flowers and leaves in salads," she says.

"Advanced gardeners should consider flax (*Linum usitatissimum*), which has pretty blue flowers and is not seen in many places," Viancour says. "Colonists used flax for paper, clothing, oil and bookbinding."



ONLINE EXCLUSIVE

Find herb buying information and a visual plant guide for all 38 Colonial herbs mentioned in this issue at www.herbcompanion.com/colonial.

traditions with a strengthening full-body massage using lemongrass and gingerroot massage oil. Also included is a unique body exfoliation with maize and various herbal powders such as carrot, honey, rose hip powder, rosemary, lavender and ginger. The same herbal blend is added to a comforting bath. The spa's signature service incorporates another African healing tradition—shea butter, otherwise known as "African Gold."

These African-inspired treatments were carefully researched by Sylvia Sepielli, who pored over many historical documents found in Colonial Williamsburg's John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library and information provided by Colonial Williamsburg's team of researchers and historians.

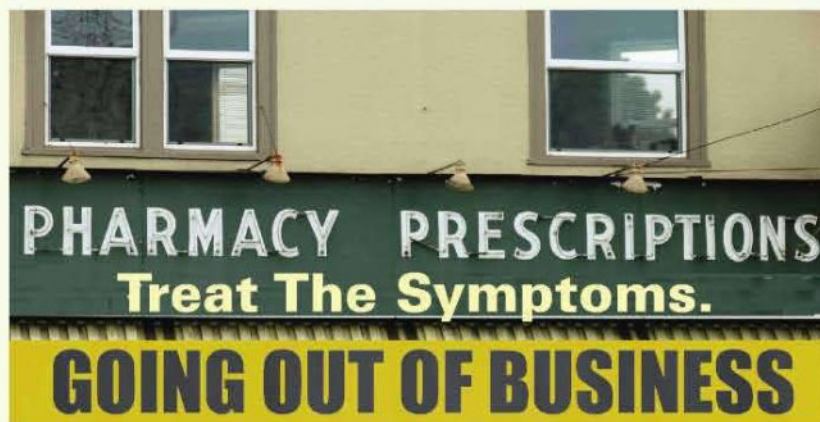
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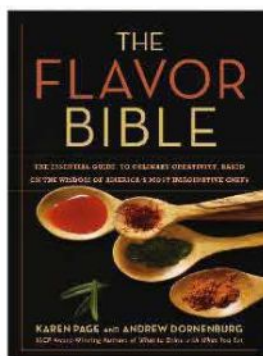
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Check out our six picks for giving outstanding herbie presents.



Oil and vinegar cruets by **Olive & Cocoa**, \$84
Store homemade herbal oils and vinegars in these beautiful cruets made from recycled glass. The set is packaged in a wooden crate. www.oliveandcocoa.com

The Flavor Bible by **Little, Brown and Company**, \$35
Boost culinary creativity with this 392-page guide. It investigates how flavors work together. www.hachettebookgroup.com



Garden Bon Bons by **Moulton**, \$14.95
These seed balls are disguised as truffles. Try Italian herbs (basil, parsley, chives and thyme) and herbal teas (lemon balm, chamomile, borage and stinging nettle). www.moultonology.com



Bay and rosemary wreath by **Organic Bouquet**, \$69.95
Decorate your home this season with a simple, yet ornate, herbal wreath. It's fragrant, eco-friendly and a wonderful addition to any door. www.organicbouquet.com



Lemongrass AromaBeads by **Aromafloria**, \$20
Place these beads, which are blended with ginger and vanilla, in a decorative dish to release their comforting fragrance. www.aromafloria.com



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Measuring spoons by **The Spoon Sisters**, \$4.95
Measure the immeasurable with these novelty spoons; they're a great stocking stuffer. www.spoonsisters.com



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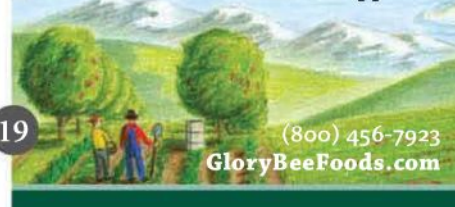
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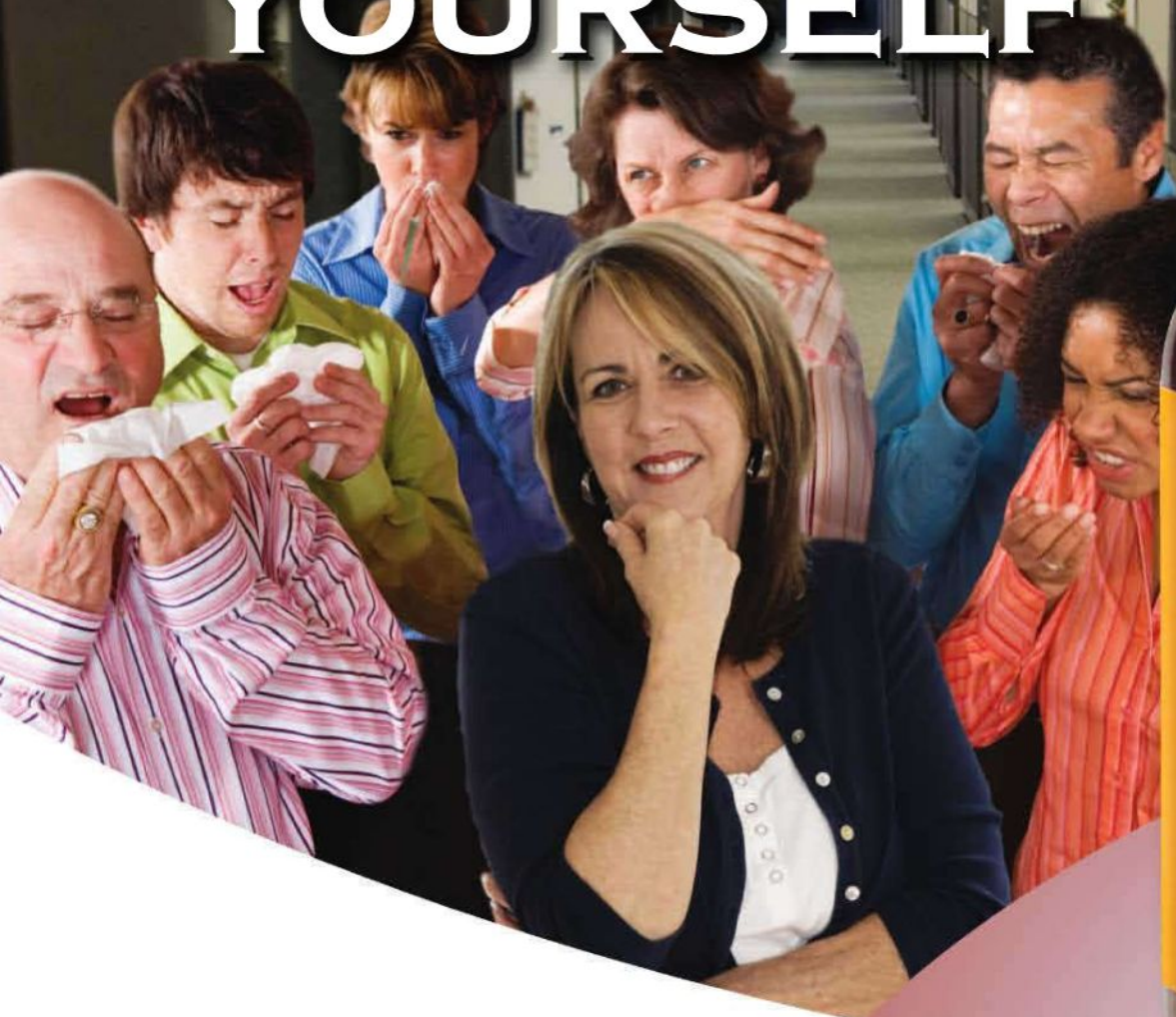
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